

## CLAIMS

1. An information processing apparatus for managing a virtual space containing a user space within the virtual space occupied by a first user, comprising:

notifying means for notifying the first user when a second user makes a request

5 for admission to user space occupied by the first user; and

control means for controlling admission of the second user to the user space based on a response from the first user, the response being made as a result of the notification to the first user by the notifying means.

10 2. An information processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the notifying means is configured to provide at least one of a visual and audible notification to the first user.

15 3. An information processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:

storage means for storing a list of users designated by the first user as those denied admission to the user space; and

20 determining means for determining whether the second user is on the list stored in the storage means when the second user makes the request for admission to the user space;

wherein, when the determination means determines that the second user is on the list, the notification by the notifying means is terminated, and the control means denies the second user admission to the user space.

25 4. An information processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:

storage means for storing a list of users designated by the first user as those admitted to the user space; and

30 determining means for determining whether the second user is on the list stored in the storage means when the second user makes the request for admission to the user space;

wherein, when the determining means determines that the second user is on the list, the notification by the notifying means is terminated, and the control means permits the second user admission to the user space.

5        5. An information processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:

storage means for storing first entry information generated by the first user to allow other users to enter the user space;

distributing means for distributing the first entry information stored in the storage means to the second user in response to an instruction from the first user; and

determining means for determining whether entry information used by the second user to gain access to the user space matches the first entry information stored in the storage means when the second user uses the first entry information distributed by the distributing means to make a request for admission to the user space;

15        wherein, when the determining means determines that the entry information used by the second user matches the first entry information stored in the storage means, the notification by the notifying means is terminated, and the control means permits the second user admission to the user space.

20        6. An information processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:

storage means for storing a list of predetermined spatial locations in the virtual user space, the spatial locations being designated by the first user; and

25        placing means for placing the list stored in the storage means in predetermined user space in the virtual space in response to an instruction from the first user.

7. An information processing method for managing a virtual space containing user space occupied by a first user, the method comprising the steps of:

30        notifying the first user when a second user makes a request for admission to user space occupied by the first user; and

controlling admission of the second user to the user space based on a response from the first user, the response being made as a result of the notification to the first user in the notifying step.

5        8.     A storage medium having stored therein a computer-readable program for causing a computer system to perform processing which enables a plurality of users to communicate with one another in a shared virtual space formed and provided on a computer network, the program comprising the steps of:

10        notifying a first user when a second user makes a request for admission to user space occupied by the first user; and

      controlling admission of the second user to the user space based on the result of the notification to the first user in the notifying step.

15        9.     A program for causing a computer to perform the steps of:

      notifying a first user when a second user makes a request for admission to a virtual space occupied by the first user; and

      controlling admission of the second user to the virtual space based on the result of the notification to the first user in the notifying step.

20        10.    A program as claimed in Claim 9, the program causing the computer to perform the further steps of:

      storing a list of users designated by the first user as those denied admission to the virtual space;

25        determining whether the second user is on the list when the second user makes the request for admission to the virtual space; and

      terminating the notification and denying the second user admission to the virtual space when it is determined that the second user is on the list.

30        11.    A program as claimed in Claim 9, the program causing the computer to perform the further steps of:

      storing a list of users designated by the first user as those permitted admission to the virtual space;

determining whether the second user is on the list when the second user makes the request for admission to the virtual space; and

terminating the notification and permitting the second user admission to the virtual space when it is determined that the second user is on the list.

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12. A program as claimed in Claim 9, the program causing the computer to perform the further steps of:

storing first entry information generated by the first user to allow other users to enter the virtual space;

10 distributing the stored first entry information to the second user in response to an instruction from the first user;

determining whether entry information used by the second user to gain access to the virtual space matches the stored first entry information when the second user uses the distributed first entry information to make a request for admission to the

15 virtual space; and

terminating the notification and permitting the second user admission to the virtual space when it is determined in the determining step that the entry information used by the second user matches the stored first entry information.

20 13. A program as claimed in Claim 9, the program causing the computer to perform the further steps of:

storing a list of predetermined spatial locations in the virtual space, the spatial locations being designated by the first user; and

25 placing the stored list in predetermined space in the virtual space in response to an instruction from the first user.